

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Until the 1700's, people of France accepted the fact that their king ruled by divine right, that Church teachings were correct, and that well-to-do nobles had privileges not enjoyed by the poor. But by the end of the century, Frenchmen no longer accepted these beliefs. This change in attitude came about as the result of writings by a group known as the "philosophes".

The philosophes were intelligent, reasonable men who felt there was much about life in Europe that was unfair and unjust. Since most philosophes were from France, and since France was ruled by an absolute monarch surrounded by a privileged nobility, the French way of life came under particular attack.

The chart which follows lists four leading thinkers of the 1700's. They published writings during a period called the Age of Reason, or Enlightenment. Many ideas from the Enlightenment were eventually adopted by countries in Europe and around the world. Ideas even spread to the United States and are today a part of our way of life.

Read each statement by the philosophes given on the chart and decide whether the statement is a true description of present American life. If it is true of the United States today, fill in the space with yes. If the idea or attitude is not true of present life in the U.S., put no in the space.

Philosophe	Statements	True in the U.S. Today? (yes or no)
John Locke	(1) All men are free and equal at birth. (2) Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and the ownership of property. (3) Citizens have the right to overthrow the government when their "natural rights" are violated. (4) Rulers receive the right to govern from the people, and unfair rulers can be forced from power. (5) Man is not born to be a good or evil person -- he is made one or the other by his life experiences and society around him.	(1) _____ (2) _____ (3) _____ (4) _____ (5) _____
Baron de Montesquieu	(1) An absolute ruler is an undesirable leader because one-man rule limits such basic freedoms as speech, press, and religion. (2) There should be a "separation of powers" in government between legislative, executive, and judicial branches. (3) Slavery, torture, religious persecution, and censorship are all wrong. (4) A man is innocent until a jury finds him guilty. (5) When one country increases its military power, so do other countries -- therefore, all nations should limit their military strength in order to reduce the chances of war.	(1) _____ (2) _____ (3) _____ (4) _____ (5) _____

Philosophe	Statements	True in the U.S. Today? (yes or no)
Voltaire	(1) A man should not be persecuted because of his religious beliefs.	(1) _____
	(2) An intelligent person should not accept all religious beliefs -- we should only accept those beliefs about God that are based on reason and common sense.	(2) _____
	(3) Religious myths and ceremonies do nothing to make men better, and, therefore, should be ignored.	(3) _____
	(4) Clergymen are more interested in increasing the power of the Church than they are in making man better.	(4) _____
	(5) A scientist is a greater person than a conquering general.	(5) _____
	(6) All men should be treated as equals, and should have freedom of speech and freedom of the press.	(6) _____
	(7) Democracy is not a good form of government because the common people are not capable of governing themselves; the best government is one headed by a good and fair king.	(7) _____
Jean Jacques Rousseau	(1) It is unfair that some people are rich while other people are poor.	(1) _____
	(2) The rich should not enjoy special privileges.	(2) _____
	(3) Compared to man during the Stone Age, modern man is unhappy, insecure, and greedy.	(3) _____
	(4) Social and political reforms must be made before man can be a good person.	(4) _____
	(5) Democracy is a good form of government.	(5) _____

- (1) If the philosophes were alive today, do you think they would be generally satisfied or dissatisfied with social conditions and the type of government we have in the United States? Explain your answer.

- (2) Which 3 statements by the philosophes do you believe are of greatest importance to mankind?

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(3) Choose 1 statement and tell why you disagree with it.

statement: _____

reason for disagreement: _____

(4) Not all philosophes held the same beliefs. But most agreed that:

- (a) reason should be used at all times
- (b) the search for new knowledge and ideas should continue
- (c) improvements must be made in the system of justice to end unfair jail sentences, the torture of prisoners, and terrible conditions in prisons
- (d) slavery and warfare should be done away with
- (e) freedom of religion, speech, and press must be given to all
- (f) everyone should enjoy liberty and equality
- (g) there should be public education for all, not just schools for children of the rich

Based on these beliefs, do you think the philosophes would approve or disapprove of the following events?

- 1. _____ Kings ruling by divine right.
- 2. _____ Peter the Great increasing religious freedom in Russia.
- 3. _____ Peter the Great building a navy and making improvements in the Russian army.
- 4. _____ Philip II sending the Spanish Armada to England.
- 5. _____ Henry IV of France giving religious freedom to Huguenots.
- 6. _____ Sir Isaac Newton discovering the law of gravity.
- 7. _____ Louis XIV building the magnificent palace at Versailles.
- 8. _____ French nobles going hunting, boating, and enjoying the ballet, sporting events, and horse shows.
- 9. _____ Louis XIV ruling as an absolute monarch.
- 10. _____ Russian czars building schools and hospitals.
- 11. _____ Religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants.
- 12. _____ Ferdinand and Isabella making Spain a Catholic nation-state.
- 13. _____ The starting of a system of common law and the beginning of trial by jury in England.
- 14. _____ King John signing the Magna Carta which limited the power of the English king.
- 15. _____ France and England fighting one another in the Hundred Years' War.
- 16. _____ The English people being represented by Parliament.
- 17. _____ "Bloody Mary" burning 300 Catholics at the stake.
- 18. _____ The Renaissance sweeping across Western Europe.
- 19. _____ The Glorious Revolution in England which resulted in the adoption of a Bill of Rights.
- 20. _____ Galileo becoming the founder of experimental science.